United Nations A/AC.183/SR.343

General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 August 2012

Original: English

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 343rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 12 June 2012, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Diallo ..... (Senegal)

Contents

Adoption of the agenda

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

Report on the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine and the United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held at United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) headquarters from 30 May to 1 June 2012

United Nations Asia and Pacific Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, to be held at Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific headquarters in Bangkok on 10 and 11 July 2012

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the record of this meeting and of other meetings will be issued in a corrigendum.

12-36993 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

2. **The Chair**, summarizing activities and developments that had taken place since the Committee's previous meeting, said that on 16 May 2012, a reshuffled 24-member Palestinian Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Fayyad, had been sworn in by President Abbas. On 20 May 2012, Palestinian factions had reached agreement in Cairo under Egyptian auspices on a new timetable for elections in six months. A Central Elections Commission delegation had arrived in Gaza on 28 May 2012 to start work on voter registration. An interim Government would be formed in June 2012 and would prepare for presidential and parliamentary elections.

3. On 29 May 2012, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process had briefed the Security Council, noting that the exchange of letters between the Israeli and Palestinian sides had led to quiet direct engagement. He had warned that, if the parties did not grasp the current opportunity, they could be moving towards a one-State reality. On 30 and 31 May 2012, the Committee had convened a United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine on the theme of "The role of youth and women in the peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine" at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), followed by a United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace on 1 June 2012. The Chair's summary of the meetings had been distributed by the secretariat.

4. On 31 May 2012, Israel had released to the Palestinians the remains of 91 militants buried in the areas under Israeli control. Also on 31 May, the Palestinian Liberation Organization had strongly criticized a United States Senate bill which sought to limit the assistance provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to the original refugees of 1948 only.

5. On 3 June 2012, the Palestinian Chief Negotiator had announced that, during a meeting of the Arab Peace Initiative Follow-up Committee in Doha, agreement had been reached on a $100 million contingency fund that would be established if Israel were to withhold tax revenue from the Palestinian Authority.

6. On 6 June 2012, the day after the 45th anniversary of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, the Knesset had voted down a bill aimed at retroactively legalizing the Ulpana settlement outpost, for which the Supreme Court had issued a demolition order. On the same day, the Israeli Government had announced plans to build 851 new settlement housing units, which had been roundly condemned by the international community. Settlements violated road map obligations, undermined the current efforts to revitalize the peace process, and eroded the two-State solution. Also on 6 June, the Permanent Representative of Pakistan had announced that the Non-Aligned Movement caucus would encourage the Security Council to visit the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

7. The annual United Nations Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East was being held on 12 and 13 June 2012. The Chair of the Committee had sent a message to the Seminar, the text of which had been distributed by the secretariat.

8. **Mr. Munir** (Pakistan) said that the non-aligned caucus, following a discussion with the office of the President of the Security Council, would hold further consultations and then brief the Security Council further.

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

9. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for Palestine) said that in the previous week the Palestinian people had commemorated the 45th year since the start of Israel's military occupation of the Palestinian land in June 1967. In May 2012, they had commemorated the 64th year since the 1948 Al-Nakba uprooting of the Palestinian people from the homeland, a tragedy that remained at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the absence of peace and stability in the region. The Palestinian people had suffered decades of oppression and suffering and the ongoing obstruction of the realization of freedom, dignity, peace, coexistence and security in the homeland. Israel, the occupying Power, continued its expansionist policy and its denial and

violation of the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, including the rights to self-determination and return, while the international community failed to muster the political will to hold Israel accountable and compel its compliance with international law.

10. In the short period since the Committee had last met, conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, had deteriorated. Efforts had been made to keep the United Nations and its Member States fully informed of that situation and details of the negative developments had been communicated to the Secretary-General and the Presidents of the Security Council and the General Assembly. The international community should act responsibly to bring an end to that illegitimate situation in all its manifestations.

11. The crisis of the Palestinian political prisoners remained of grave concern. Nearly 5,000 Palestinian civilians, including more than 200 children, were being held in Israeli jail and detention centres, enduring inhumane conditions and treatment. Every day more Palestinians were being detained, including, on the previous day, five youths in the West Bank and an entire family from East Jerusalem.

12. The hunger strike undertaken by nearly 2,000 prisoners in recent months had drawn attention to the plight of those held under administrative detention, for years in some cases, without being charged and without access to due process of law. As a result of mediation by the Egyptian Government, on 14 May 2012 Israel had agreed to meet some of the main demands, including putting an end to the renewal of administrative detentions and granting permission for family visits to prisoners from the Gaza Strip and access to education. Unfortunately, Israel had continued to renege on the provisions of that agreement, and as a result, some prisoners were still on hunger strike. The most severe case was that of Mahmoud Al-Sarsak, a member of Palestine's national football team, who had been imprisoned since July 2009 without any charge. He was currently on his 86th day of hunger strike and his life was in imminent danger. Another Palestinian, Akram Al-Rekawi, in detention since June 2004, had been on hunger strike for 62 days. She called again on the international community, including the Security Council and the General Assembly, to act in accordance with obligations under international law to bring a halt to Israel's illegal repressive policies and to help restore the rights and dignity of Palestinian prisoners and their families.

13. Israel had also continued its illegal settlement campaign throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which continued to inflame tensions. Extremist Israeli settlers continued their rampages of terror and intimidation, attacking and harassing Palestinian civilians, including children, and seizing and destroying Palestinian homes and land with impunity, while exerting their negative influence on the decisions and actions of the Israeli Government.

14. The expansionist and destructive Israeli campaign continued to undermine all efforts to resume peace negotiations while at the same time destroying the viability of a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. Settlement construction and land confiscation continued unabated, as did Israel's attempts to entrench so-called settlement outposts on Palestinian land, in contravention of international law, its obligations and commitments under the road map to dismantle all outposts, and its own judicial rulings. Attempts to circumvent High Court rulings had included the transfer of the Ulpana settlers to another area near the Beit El settlement and the declaration of intent to build hundreds more settlements throughout the Palestinian land, including in East Jerusalem. Such provocative, illegal actions entrenched rather than reversed the occupation and only served to underscore Israel's rejection of international law, the two-State solution and a peaceful settlement to the conflict.

15. The demolition of Palestinian homes and properties continued to cause homelessness, displacement and loss of livelihood for many families. In just the past month, residential tents housing over 30 Palestinians, a home in East Jerusalem, a gas station and shop had been demolished. Agricultural land had been razed and olive trees uprooted. That same day, a complex of sheep barns in East Jerusalem had been demolished and the inhabitants of the village of Susiya were at risk of forced displacement. Demolition orders were pending against Palestinian homes, schools, roads and solar energy facilities. A recent report by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs indicated that the demolitions and displacements were at their highest levels since systematic documentation had begun in 2006.

16. All such acts constituted violations of the law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and of the

human rights of the Palestinian people. The international community should condemn all Israeli settlement activities and demand their immediate cessation, as they were a major obstacle to the revival of negotiations for achievement of a just peace based on the two-State solution on the 1967 borders. That would require collective action, including by the Security Council, and she appealed to Member States to find the political will to uphold their obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

17. In the past few weeks, repeated Israeli air strikes against the Gaza Strip had further aggravated the critical humanitarian situation in Gaza, which was facing its worst shortage of medicines since the blockade had begun.

18. Serious efforts were continuing with a view to unifying the Palestinians by reaching common ground on the implementation of agreements already concluded. That included efforts to form an interim unity government to oversee Palestinian elections and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.

19. The extremely fragile situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, continued to deteriorate as the political process remained deadlocked owing to Israel's refusal to abide by the basic parameters of the peace process in accordance with United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map. The Palestinian leadership continued to cooperate with international efforts to resume the peace process and to bring an end to the conflict and tragedy endured by their people. Israel should immediately cease all of its settlement activities and abide by the 1967 borders as the basis for negotiations.

Report on the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine and the United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, to be held at United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) headquarters from 30 May to 1 June 2012

20. **Mr. Grima** (Malta), Rapporteur, said that the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine and the United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace had had complementary themes: "The role of youth and women in the peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine" and "Civil society action towards ending the occupation: Harnessing the power of youth and women", respectively. The meetings had been attended by representatives of Governments, the Holy See, Palestine, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations system entities, civil society organizations and the media, as well as a delegation from the Committee.

21. The Secretary-General had sent a video message to the International Meeting in which he had called on Palestinian and Israeli youth to build a future of peace and urged greater involvement of women in the peace process. The Chair of the Committee had urged the region's women and youth to become more actively and visibly involved in pursuit of peace, while the international community was struggling to reinvigorate the peace process.

22. The Deputy Director-General of UNESCO had reaffirmed the Organization's commitment to a just and lasting peace, to women's rights, to the preservation of Palestinian cultural heritage, and to high quality education, which taught peace, human rights and respect for the culture of others.

23. The Palestinian Authority Minister for Women's Affairs, the first keynote speaker, had said that Palestinian women, who bore the brunt of the occupation, had made progress in public life in recent years but needed economic empowerment to sustain their advancement. She had called on women to work together to overcome the intra-Palestinian rift and urged youth to put pressure on States that could influence the resolution of the Palestinian issue.

24. The Honorary Ambassador of France, welcoming the granting by UNESCO of membership to Palestine, had said that the Palestinians were still in an unacceptable predicament. He had highlighted the role of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine in scrutinizing actions that violated international law.

25. Speakers in Plenary I had focused on the damaging impact of the Israeli occupation on youth and women, due to residency restrictions, checkpoints, house demolitions, imprisonment, psychological and physical torture and violence, exacerbated by archaic laws and customs. Nevertheless, youth and women were involved in activism and had achieved some successes, as in the case of the hunger strikers.

26. Experts in Plenary II had considered the empowerment of women and youth. They had stressed

the need for better quality and more relevant education, the empowering roles of social activism and social media, and the need to implement Security Council resolutions in the Palestinian context to protect civilians.

27. In Plenary III, speakers had focused on the role of the international community, including the United Nations and civil society. The need for civil society to work to change the Israeli mindset towards Palestinians, confront illegal settlements, promote a rights-based diplomacy and mobilize for boycotts, divestment and sanctions, had been among the suggestions raised. There had been calls for closer coordination between donors, United Nations and civil society in support of Palestinian priorities.

28. The United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace had taken place on 1 June 2012. Civil society organizations had participated in workshops on themes such as advocacy, mobilization, humanitarian assistance and monitoring to ensure accountability. Workshop participants had made recommendations concerning the need to educate both sides to overcome the conflict, the need for media tools and financing to establish independent media and the need for assistance to be transparent, efficient and responsive to local needs. The Yala group had presented an interactive demonstration of their online youth peace conference.

29. The Committee delegation had met with the Deputy Director-General of UNESCO to discuss issues such as the Palestinian sites submitted for the World Heritage List and possible training for staff of the Palestinian Authority. Two members of the delegation, the Chair and the Observer for Palestine, had visited Lisbon on 2 June 2012.

30. Thanks to social media outreach efforts, information about the meetings had reached an estimated audience of 150,000 on Twitter alone. All papers of the meetings, including the press releases for each session, had been placed on the website of the Division for Palestinian Rights. Comprehensive reports of the two meetings would be issued as a United Nations publication.

31. **The Chair** said that bilateral meetings had been held in Lisbon on 2 June 2012 with Portuguese parliamentarians and representatives of civil society. The purpose of the meetings had been to raise awareness of the cause of Palestine among parliamentarians and academics, receive information on civil society activities and explore the possibility of organizing an international United Nations meeting in Lisbon on the question of Palestine. Fruitful discussions with the representatives of six parliamentary groups, including the two coalition parties in power, had focused on the possible establishment of a friendship group of Palestinian and Portuguese parliamentarians, recognition of the State of Palestine and the Portuguese Government's position in the United Nations, including in the Committee, on the question of Palestine.

32. The delegation had also participated in a debate at the Lusophone University in Lisbon with academics, journalists and civil society representatives who defended the cause of Palestine and emphasized the right of the State of Palestine to be recognized by the international community. The debate had resulted in a declaration of support for an independent Palestine by the Movement for the Rights of the Palestinian People and for Peace in the Middle East and an offer from the Dean of the University to make its premises available for a United Nations meeting. The Committee would continue its relations with the Portuguese Government and its collaboration with the Movement for the Rights of the Palestinian People and for Peace in the Middle East. He took it that the Committee wished to take note of the report.

33. *It was so decided.*

United Nations Asia and Pacific Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, to be held at Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific headquarters in Bangkok on 10 and 11 July 2012
(Working Paper No. 3)

34. **The Chair** said that the provisional programme for the event was contained in Working Paper No. 3. The theme of the Meeting would be "International efforts at addressing the obstacles to the two-State solution — the role of Asian and Pacific governmental and non-governmental actors". The objective of the Meeting was to encourage broad international action, including by Asian and Pacific States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society, for achieving a peaceful solution to the conflict based on a shared vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The Meeting would consider obstacles and opportunities on the road to achieving peace and ways in which Governments,

intergovernmental organizations and civil society could be instrumental in helping the parties to resume and strengthen the political dialogue and in promoting and applying the principles of international law to efforts aimed at resolving the conflict. From the regional perspective, Asian and Pacific States could contribute to resolving the conflict through their action in national and intergovernmental mechanisms.

35. **Mr. Srivali** (Thailand) said that Thailand was honoured to serve as the venue for that very important meeting.

36. **The Chair** said he took it that the Committee wished to approve the provisional programme for the Meeting as contained in Working Paper No. 3.

37. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.